89-GS-61 VOTED: The 17th General Synod adopts the Resolution "The Relationship Between the United Church of Christ and the Muslim Community."

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AND THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Theological Rationale

God calls the people of Cod to be agents of reconciliation, breaking down walls of division nationally, culturally, racially, and religiously (Eph.2:11-18)

Historical Background

The advent of Christianity in human history in the first century A.D. was preceded by Judaism which shares a common heritage and a context for understanding the New Testament. Islam, the third of the Abrahamic and monotheistic religions, was developed in the 7th century of the Christian era. The Old and New Testament interpretations do not require reference to Islam for Christian understanding and thus Christians have traditionally understood little of the faith and beliefs of Muslims.

Therefore, despite worship of the same God, recognition of common prophets, a shared vision of God's justice, righteousness, compassion and presence in the world, Christians and Muslims have had a history of intolerance, vilification and hostility in word and action as exemplified in the characterization and writings of theologians and scholars beginning with contacts in the seventh century, in wars often explained as religiously stereotyping common in the present.

Further, with the presence of growing Muslim populations and communities in the United States American Christians have the opportunity to broaden their experience, revise attitudes and enrich theological perspectives of their faith in context of Islam and the witness of Muslims.

Summary

Faced with the recognition that history extends forward as well as backwards from the crucifixion (in the words of Pilgrim’s pastor, John Robinson, "God has yet more truth and light to break forth from His word") and that Christians have often ignored and been openly hostile to the revelation of God to Muslims, we ask for open hearts and minds as we as Christians learn about and support Muslims in their faithfulness in affirming the same God and our common prophets, as we discover in Islam a perspective on our beliefs and traditions and we rejoice in sharing with Muslims a hope in the principle of justice and righteousness and a belief in the peace of submission to God.

Text of the Resolution

WHEREAS, the God we worship is the God of all creation, and

WHEREAS, we recognize that we share a common tradition of revelation through God's prophets as told in sacred scripture, and a common belief in the compassion, justice, authority and presence of Cod

in human life and society, and

WHEREAS, there exists a lack of understanding in our society about the Muslim community and its religion, and

WHEREAS, injustice and intolerance exist because of this lack of understanding;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod of the United Church of Christ encourages members of the United Church of Christ to seek greater understanding about Islam in the society as a whole.

FURTHER, the 17th General Synod of the United Church of Christ encourages the Synod to support this resolution, and

1. Calls upon the Office for Church in Society, the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries and the United Church Board for World Ministries to give the highest reasonable support to the work of the Office of Christian-Muslim Relations of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U .S.A. and to urge the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. to increase its emphasis on the work of that office, and

2. Calls upon the subject instrumentalities to coordinate with other denominations and/or other groups who are presently engaged in dialogue with the Muslim community, and

3. Calls upon the subject instrumentalities to identify educational resources for use in local churches to increase understanding of the Muslim community and to foster open dialogue, and

4. Calls upon all local congregations and regional judicatories of the United Church of Christ to actively engage in dialogue with the Muslim community in order to establish relationships of trust and cooperation and to participate in joint witness against all injustice in our local communities and in the world.

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